

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an overview of the development of English in Malaysia. The researcher would like to show how the social, economic and political contact between English and Bahasa Melayu occurred. The second section deals with the description of Malaysian English.

The third section gives a brief description of nativization of English. The fourth section describes the media of English newspapers or dailies (either word will be used throughout the dissertation) in Malaysia.

In the fifth section the statement of the problem is discussed. In the sixth section, the purpose of the study is described and the selection of the corpus is explained. In the seventh section, the lexical items and the types of borrowings become the focus of the study.

The eighth section, the researcher discusses the significance of the study. In the ninth section, the researcher describes the limitations of the study. In the tenth section, the researcher provides the definition of terms used in this study.

#### **1.1 The Development of English in Malaysia**

Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural country with three main ethnic groups the Malays, Chinese and Indians each having its own language and dialects. English according to Wong (1989: 94) was first introduced to the country and spread through

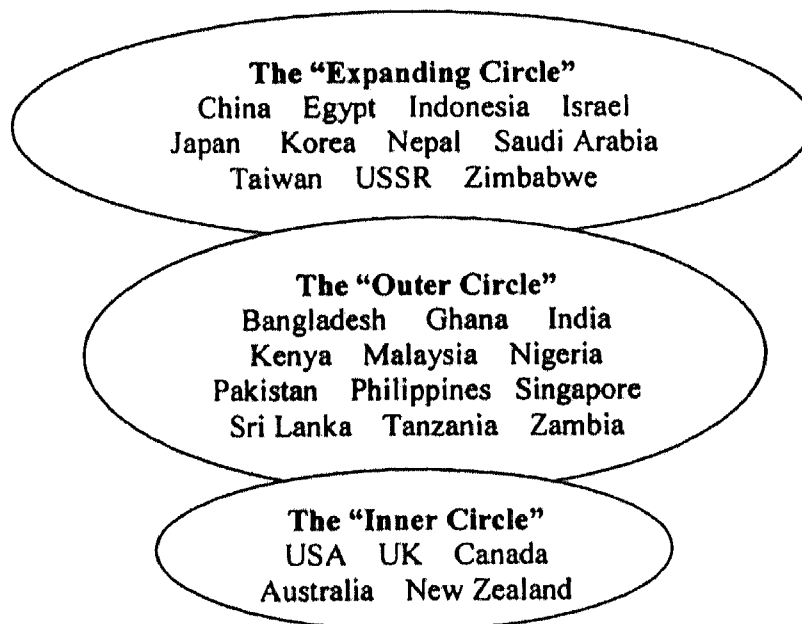
Peninsula Malaysia in the nineteenth century when it was realised that “knowledge of the

Colonialists” language gave access to both prestige and power”. Therefore, by the time the country achieved independence in 1957, the greatest social and economic advantages came with the learning of English, so that the ambitious and far-sighted of each race sent their children to English medium schools for a western type education. The nationalistic elements paved way for the Malay language (ML) to be the official language (Asmah, 1972). The years that followed saw the ML as the official language become increasingly important.

Today, the ML is the sole official language (The Federal Constitution of Malaysia 1957, Article 152). The ML became the medium of instruction in all the schools and most tertiary institutions, while English was taught only as a second language (SL). The only status accorded to English is in the national education policy, which refers to English as “the second most important language” (Asmah Haji Omar, 1992: 84). This status had been accorded to it even before independence by the 1956 Committee on Education (Kementerian Pelajaran Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, 1956). It is undeniable that English is still important both as a lingua franca and as an international language in the country (Benson, 1990: 19). However, according to Augustin (1982), English was widely used in the 1950’s and 1960’s by the current Malaysian elite from the three major ethnic groups, most of whom received their education in English medium schools and were still quite proficient in English. Lee posits (1987) that when English had obtained high status in Malaysia, the model that the Malaysian users aimed at was Standard British English (SBE). It was inevitable, however, that the different languages of the various ethnic groups and the variety of conditions under which English was used

should have a strong influence on the minority who spoke English. With the co-occurrence of new varieties, nations throughout the world, mostly the commonwealth nations and colonised countries, were faced with the emergence of New Englishes. As in these countries, a variety that is to be called ME evolved in this country too. The question that arises from this situation is that, is it legitimately possible or socially sound to have this variety referred to as ME?

ME is one of the non-native varieties of English (Kachru, 1986), which has developed in many of the multilingual former colonies of Britain and United states (e.g. Nigeria, Kenya, India and Philippines). Kachru (1990:3) claims that he sees the diffusion of English in terms of three concentric circles (Figure 1): the Inner Circle (L1 varieties, e.g. the USA and the U.K.), the Outer Circle (ESL varieties) and the Expanding Circle (EFL varieties). This diffusion of English is illustrated in the diagram below:



**Figure 1**  
**Three Concentric Circles**  
(Kachru 1990:4)

According to Quirk (1988, 1989 in Kachru, 1990) there were imperialistic views about language in most cultures. These emphasised the need for the nation to be brought up in its own culture and language. These views have been surpassed by the need to communicate on a larger scale with the outside world. The realization of economic, political and econo-cultural gain from language contact has motivated many nations to preserve the status of English outside the native context as a second language or foreign language.

The effects of English in Malaysia are still widely felt today, especially in the government sector, in education and the media. The media, in particular, can be said to be the area in which English is most widely used in Malaysia: Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) has many programmes in English; English newspapers have a wide circulation; English magazines and books enjoy a good demand and advertising agencies use English widely to exploit the prestige and the status associated with the language.

In view of this, it is not surprising that such close contact should have resulted in the English language, which is in the process of nativization, borrowing extensively from the local languages, with most borrowings from the Malay language. One of the areas in which this aspect is most obvious is journalistic writing in English, especially in the English language newspapers.

Its presence in the linguistic scene in Malaysia has been in a state of flux. Pennycook (1994:217) states that "the fortunes of English in Malaysia have waxed and waned and waxed again, and it never seems far from the centre of debate".

An examination of the varied viewpoints, reflections and studies by linguists is inevitable at this juncture to understand ME.

## **1.2 Malaysian English**

ME has been variously described and categorized (Tongue, 1979; Platt, Weber and Ho, 1984; Lowenberg, 1984; Baskaran, 1987; Benson, 1990). Tongue (1979) categorises English in Singapore and Malaysia (ESM) into two dialects: formal and informal. He perceives English in Malaysia and Singapore not as a new non-native variety of English, but as a dialect, which has deviated from SBE. Tongue states that there is little nativization of the formal dialect and that the informal variety is a highly nativized “sub-standard” dialect. The notion of “sub-standard” is seen in relation to the SBE. Tongue appears not to recognise that these innovations have evolved as the result of the new cultural and linguistic contexts in which English has been used. Lowenberg finds the colloquial English usage of Singaporeans and Malaysians “unacceptable” and “wrong” (1984: 21). He claims that they are ‘wrong’ for some words differ in meaning from SBE. In ME they portray different meanings to cater for the users at intranational level. It would be better to term this use of words as a creative process rather than accord it to the erratic perspectives.

Much of Tongue’s study is a presentation of examples of linguistic features of what he describes as dialects. His description of ESM as two dialects or varieties is restrictive as both ME and Singaporean English have developed as languages which can be described on a social scale (Platt and Weber, 1980; Baskaran, 1987), encompassing more than his two categories.

Baskaran (1987) also attempts to describe ME using a formality continuum. She divides ME into three categories, which are known as acrolect, mesolect and basilect. The acrolect is the standard ME, formally used and is internationally intelligible. The mesolect is a dialectal ME, informally used and is also nationally intelligible. The final sociolect is basilect, which is considered as sub-standard ME for colloquial use, “patois in intelligibility” (Baskaran, 1987:53). The use of these sociolects is determined by the contextual factors such as the topic, the role relationship between the addresser and the addressee and the physical setting. These factors will contribute to the communicative purpose as to whether the speakers want to establish solidarity and rapport, or keep status and prestige in the relationship or communicational interactions.

According to Platt, Weber and Ho (1994) well-known examples of New Englishes include Indian English, Philippine English, Singapore English, and the African Englishes of nations such as Nigeria and Ghana (post-colonial nations). English was introduced during the colonial era in Malaysia and to the countries mentioned above. Therefore it was first spoken and used mainly by native speakers of English from Britain and America. The colonised countries borrowed words from their previous linguistic background to convey meaning amongst themselves. New language policies in Malaysia promoted Malay as the official language namely language of government and of education (Article 152, 1956-1957 Constitutional Framework). They claim that there are two kinds of schools-the English-medium schools during the British occupation and the Malay-medium schools which came after independence.

Platt, Weber and Ho (1994:3) further posit that the ‘old kind’ of ME refers to the language used by the English-educated Malaysians and some younger Malaysian

Chinese and Indians. Generally, they include the hybrid and colonially inclined non-native standard. This variety is very similar to Singapore English. The younger Malay medium educated Malaysians speak the 'new kind' of ME.

The formal variety does often manifest itself in formal domains like the courts and school classrooms. Malaysian newspaper writers in English, in '*The New Straits Times*', often depict this phenomenon of acrolectal level non-native English in newspaper writing. This phenomenon is stated also in the studies of Platt and Weber (1980) and Baskaran (1987).

### **1.3 Nativization of English**

The worldwide spread and use of the English language by many will inevitably undergo changes. Many of these countries such as those in the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle see Figure 1 (Kachru, 1990: 4); have been influenced by English for about more than a century. English in these countries inadvertently have undergone changes as a result of contact with various languages with diverse cultural, economical, political and geographical settings. English adopted the local linguistic features when it came in contact with the local languages.

The process of "nativization" occurs in two phases. In the first phase, a number of vernacular words are drawn into the English language by "English speaking newcomers" for items in the local context, which have no equivalents in the English language. This phenomenon of borrowing can be easily identified in the Malaysian context. For example, '*kampong*', '*sarong*', '*sampan*' and '*kris*' have been borrowed from the Malay language and are now used by other English users.

Moag (1982) adds that, during the phase, the borrowings remain very much at the lexical level, both from the local languages into English and vice versa. This restricted borrowing at the lexical level is largely because the local learners are subjected to native speaker models of English and only specific local items are allowed into the English language. Subsequently, it is used when the need arises especially so when the local variety has far-reaching effects on the linguistic landscape. Moreover, these words that are borrowed do not exist in the English variety (SBE).

The second phase of the nativization process occurs in two ways. To begin with, English is used as a *lingua franca*, a link language for people from different language backgrounds to work together in the colonial system. In the case of Malaysia, by the late 1940s, the English language according to Maniam (1977 in Malachi, 1996) was accepted as another *lingua franca* equal to the Malay language, the national language. Moag (1982: 273) states that at this stage more native features are incorporated into English as the locals “bring familiar items and conventions in their own languages and cultures into play in the new situation”. He also states that the English language becomes the preferred medium for discussing topics which are alien or which are associated with culture. The English language, however, is still very much a foreign language at this stage as it is either sociologically or politically shaped.

This study will only concentrate on the *acrolect* variety, which is the Standard Malaysian English (SME). The example of *acrolect* variety can be seen in formal written form, which is used in newspaper writing. This variety is claimed to have evolved from a non-standard colonial expatriate English variety, a variety that has been adapted to the local context, used by expatriates and the small group of locals who have



acquired English from the colonial education system (Benson, 1990). In order to collect examples of acrolectal variety, the researcher used *The New Straits Times*, *New Sunday Times* and *The Star*, *Sunday Star*, two English newspapers in Malaysia. Extracts from the English language newspapers are studied in the next section and definitions given considerable attention.

#### **1.4 The English language Newspapers in Malaysia**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1994:799) defines 'newspaper' as 'a printed publication (usu. daily or weekly) containing news, advertisements, correspondence, etc.' According to Bradley (1965) the word 'newspaper' would seem to mean paper containing news. It is a collection of information, entertainment, advertisement and so forth printed on very cheap paper. It may be published daily, weekly, biweekly, or periodically. Most issues of any paper are out of date as soon as the next one is printed. Readers can read about most of the important events of the world in history books, but if they want to know what it was like to live through them, the best way to find out is to read the papers that were published at the time. Basically, newspapers have five functions: to serve, to provide information, to offer guidance, to give interpretation of the news and to entertain.

The primary aim of the newspaper is to provide information to the readers. In order to provide information, newspaper writing must be clear, simple, accurate and straightforward. Newspaper reports need to be understood by people from different educational backgrounds, languages and cultures. Therefore, language plays an important role in achieving the goal of giving information to the readers from all walks of life. The journalist or newspaper writer has to use a type of language, which the

society feels most comfortable with and which they can understand. Writers are supposed to approach their news with some understanding of the culture of the target society. Therefore, the decision to use some lexical items from the local languages in local English newspaper represents the writers' sensitivity towards Malaysian society.

As in any country, the media in Malaysia plays an important role in disseminating information to the public and in influencing opinion of the people. Newspapers in Malaysia are published in the Malay language, English, Chinese, and Tamil and even in Iban and the Punjabi language as well. *The New Straits Times*, *The Star*, *The Malay Mail* and *The Sun* are the English newspapers published in Peninsula Malaysia. *The New Straits Times*, *The New Sunday Times*, *The Star* and *The Sunday Star* account for about 882,147 copies of the circulation today (Internet, Audit Bureau of Circulations, Malaysia, 1 July 2003). *The New Straits Times* is in many ways the "national" newspaper in English while the others tend to be more regional newspapers. *The Malay Mail*, for instance, carries news predominantly in the Klang Valley where the capital city, Kuala Lumpur is located. *The Star* and *The Sun* also carry a substantial amount of local news.

The newspapers in Malaysia are generally regarded by the Ministry of Education and the management of the newspapers as examples of correct usage of SME. In fact the Newspaper-in-Education programme was launched in 1984, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. It was a reflection of the general attitude towards the language of the newspaper. The Newspaper in Education programme was started in Malaysia by the publisher of the *New Straits Times*, which sought to bring the real world into the classroom (Lee: 1987) by using the newspaper as resource material for teaching English

as an effective second language among Malaysian students in both primary and secondary schools.

Since language plays an important role in newspaper publication, its usage usually represents the culture and life of a particular society. In Malaysia for example, the words '*nasi lemak*', '*rendang*', '*pau*', '*dim sum*' '*roti canai*', '*vadai*' and '*lemang*' are related to the Malaysian local food and there are no accurate substitutes in English. Therefore, this fact has influenced English newspapers in Malaysia to use the lexical items from the local languages as a strategy for acculturating Standard English to reflect local culture and traditions of Malaysia. Words or expressions from other languages are also used for example '*lepak*', '*kongsi*', '*ta pau*' and '*appa*'. Cope and Kalantzis, (1996) posit that this could be related to language experiences and cultures because one uses a language from his or her own language environment. They believe that society might be designing language for a purpose. A reason could be its use in context of situation and which will relate to the people who are using it. The pertinent issue is borrowing and takes place not only from a dominant language to a local language but it can also take place the other way round.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Most theories that attempt to address this issue are based on studies of borrowings from a dominant international language into a local language, the issue of why a language like English with its vast lexical repertoire would borrow words from local vernaculars is an issue that has only recently, with the new interest in "New Englishes", begun to receive attention. More research into this area is needed to contribute to existing theories related to why a language borrows from other languages, what languages do

with their borrowed words so on. What role borrowings play in the nativization process has also not been adequately studied.

Both local and foreign linguists have investigated ME and its existence over three decades. In this study, the researcher looked at some loanwords or borrowings of other languages in English language newspapers in Malaysia, which are both varied and plentiful. The issue of SME is a growing concern not only among academicians but the general public at large. Therefore it is hoped that this research will give insights into the use of English in Malaysia and to possibly suggest maintaining British English as the standard or norm in English newspapers.

However, the use of other languages in the English newspapers raises the question of how the words have been borrowed, the type of items borrowed, and in which area of the semantic domain is borrowing prolific or pro-active.

### **1.6 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the borrowings or loanwords from other languages in the four genres namely local news, entertainment news, sport news and education news sections in the English newspapers. The researcher investigated types of lexical items or loanwords found in the English newspapers. The process of using the lexical items from other languages is most often referred to as lexical transfer, borrowings or loanwords. Related studies show that there are variations in these aspects by which lexical items have been borrowed into English. This study attempted to analyse these variations by examining the lexical items borrowed from other languages

that are found in the genres namely Local News, Sports News, Education News and Entertainment News sections of two English newspapers.

### **1.7 Focus of the Study**

This study attempts to look at the borrowing of English lexical items in two English newspapers as mentioned earlier. To analyse the borrowings, lexical items will be classified according to loanwords and borrowed phrases in the four genres and semantic domains. The focus of the study is therefore to find out

- 1 The types of items borrowed and in which genre
- 2 The purposes of borrowing
- 3 The genre with the most borrowing
- 4 The implications of borrowing (for such issues as nativization, intelligibility and so on.)

In order to compare the variations in the aspects mentioned earlier, the researcher analysed the other language borrowings found in the sections under two differential factors: types of borrowing and reasons for borrowing in the four genres and semantic domains.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

Traditionally, borrowings are generally studied from the perspective of borrowings from a dominant language into a less dominant one. The new perspective adopted in this study may

- A. help refine theories related to language in contact, specifically in relation to the type and direction of borrowing and reasons for borrowing

B. throw some light on the role of lexical borrowings in the Nativization process.

It will show the types of loanwords or lexical items used in the newspapers. Apart from that, it is important to find out the use of the loanwords or lexical items in the newspapers and to what extent they have been used and for what purpose. As there is a long history of contact between the two languages, there have not been many detailed studies on the subject from the newspapers.

The study will also attempt to examine whether any underlying pattern of borrowing in the English newspapers can be established. To do this, the borrowings will be studied in their contexts of use.

In the area of mass communication English is an established lingua franca while some of the local languages are still developing. English today is used in a wide variety of contexts outside the inner circle (Kachru, 1990) and therefore it has to accommodate to a constant bombardment of current concepts and ideas, particularly from the local languages. The newspaper is one of the best criteria to assess the extent to which ideas and concepts are being absorbed into English as it is being used in the local context.

Another aspect to consider is that the English language newspaper has a tremendous influence on the English language used by the people, as they are generally accessible to literate people from all walks of life.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be of real assistance to language teachers, planners and anyone interested to see the type of English language used in newspapers.

The choice of the genres namely Local News, Sports News, Entertainment News, and Education News as areas of research is of relevance to the users and readers of the newspapers and the English language.

The people most immediately concerned with the development of the English language in terms of its lexical expansion may also find this study relevant to their work. The findings of this study may indicate whether the current trend of borrowing in English newspapers signals an implication that, in the future, the ability to understand the English language used in local English newspapers would necessitate a basic knowledge of the Malay language.

Furthermore, this study may also be useful as reference material for researchers who intend to study the use of the English language in the mass media. As in all qualitative studies there are limitations and this is what will be looked at in the next section.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

The results derived from the qualitative study need to be examined and interpreted with some limitations in mind. Due to time constraints the researcher only looked at two major newspapers. *The New Straits Times*, *New Sunday Times* and *The Star and Sunday Star* published from 21 July 2002 to 3 August 2002.

This study is limited to the semantic aspects of lexical borrowings from other languages into English. It is not possible to explore phonological factors since the data is wholly from written sources. Written sources are preferred over oral because writing is done in

Standard English Language and moreover, is unaffected by other variables such as dialect and pronunciation.

The emphasis is on the borrowings of the lexical items themselves and not on the structure of the language such as the subject and predicate, clause, grammatical items and so forth. There have been no attempts to describe the structure of the borrowed language, except where it is necessary in order to explain certain innovations in the borrowed lexical form itself and not on that of the language. In this study, loanwords have been classified according to the four genres and semantic domains. However, in the interpretation and analysis of data, loanwords that are merely brands or names of products, cars, people, roads, buildings, songs, events and organisations have not been considered. It is not within the scope of this study to chart patterns of borrowing or to discuss implications that are of a macro scale outside the parameter of the 28 newspapers studied over a period of 2 weeks.

The data of this study comprises loanwords from only four genres, namely Education News, Local News, Sports News and Entertainment News sections. In theory, there is likely to be some overlap between the genres. For example, sports news or news about education could be reported under the section, local news. For ease of coding, the study only records each borrowed item under the section of the newspaper in which it occurred. In practice, however, such overlaps seldom occurred in the data studied. It has also been necessary to narrow the areas of study to only four sections of the English newspapers due to constraints of time and scope.



### **1.10 Definitions of the terms in the contexts of this study are as follows:**

#### **1. Borrowing**

Gumperz (1977: 35 in Kahlah, 2001) explains that “borrowing” consists of “the introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one language into the other. The items in question are incorporated into the grammatical system of the borrowed language”. Richards and Platt state that ‘borrowing is said to have taken place when a word or a phrase is taken out from one language and is used in another language’ (1933: 40).

#### **2. Genre**

Genre in the context of this study refers to particular style or type of newspaper writing which is typical of certain sections of the newspaper. Genre is the grouping of related words in particular news as seen in this study. The four genres examined in this study are Education News, Sports News, Local News and Entertainment News.

#### **3. Lexical item:**

A lexical item is a unit of the vocabulary, which may be a word or phrase (Zaidan, 1992: 33). Richard, Platt and Weber (1985:163) further define lexical item as the ‘the smallest unit in the meaning system of a language that can be distinguished from other similar units’. According to them, ‘in English, all inflected forms such as ‘give’, ‘gives’, ‘given’, ‘giving’, ‘gave’ would belong to the one lexeme ‘give’. Similarly, such expressions as ‘bury the hatchet’, ‘hammer and tongs’, ‘give up’ and ‘white paper’ would each be considered a single lexeme. In a dictionary, each lexeme merits a separate entry or sub-entry’.

#### 4. Nativization/Indigenization

The adaptation a language may undergo when it is used in a different cultural and social situation. English in India, for example, is said to have undergone nativization because changes have occurred in aspects of its phonology, vocabulary and grammar so that it is now recognized as a distinct variety of English – Indian English.

(Kachru, 1981 in Richard, Platt and Weber, 1985: 188)

#### 5. Semantic Domain

The semantic domain refers to classifications of related words or phrases under the general domains such as Social Concepts, Arts and Communication, Food and Drinks, Musical Instruments, Inanimate Objects and others which are discussed in this study. Semantic sub-domains refer to words grouped, classified or categorised under semantic domains in this study. For example, Inanimate Objects – *ringgit, periuk, bunga telur* etc.

#### 6. Standard English

The only non-localized dialect of global currency without significant variation is a variety of English. It is substantially uniform in grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Moreover, it is universally accepted as the appropriate educational target in teaching English.

(Strevens, 1983:66)

#### 7. Unassimilated Loanwords

These are loanwords, which have not been orthographically adapted and are identical both in form and meaning to the original word e.g., *Hari Raya, rakyat, ummah, sambal, ikan, pelanduk, Datuk, Tan Sri, assam*, etc.

(Heah, 1989)

### **1.9 Conclusion**

The focus of this study is on two aspects which are to explore the suggestive trends in borrowing in English newspapers and to discover whether it depicts a growing influence of borrowings from other languages in the English language used by newspapers in Malaysia. It is hoped that the findings and interpretation of this study will be advantageous to the process of language development in Malaysia and to related studies in these four genres.